2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

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crop failures. Also I was told that important village headmen are buried with their heads pointing to the east.

The Yao concept of the past is reflected in the principles of political organization of these Machinga chiefdoms. The invasion is the datum point from which rank mainly stems. We may classify modern headmen into: those who were in the area before the Yao invasion, i.e. the Aborigines; the Invaders; and those who have come in since the invasion and have had to submit themselves to the Machinga chief, i.e. the Newcomers. The principle behind this classification of headmen is fundamental to Yao political structure. Stated most simply it is the rule that MacDonald quoted in describing the development of local organization: 'However large the settlement may become the man that is first in is the chief or headman.'[1] This is, of course, somewhat of a simplification, but the rule contains the essence of the principle. It was reversed for the Aboriginal Nyanja because the Yao subjugated them. But the claims of the Nyanja chiefs to rank because they had occupied the land first were recognized by the Yao who absorbed them into the social structure in positions of high rank.

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But the principle holds among the Yao themselves, and for the Nguru in their movements after the White conquest. The operation of the principle is clearest in the structure of small local areas such as Chiwalo's. When Chiwalo's area was first settled, just after World War I, there were large tracts of unoccupied land. The first headmen to move into this region were Cigwaja, Kapaloma, Nyanje, Makata and Mumbwa. The local chief Chiwalo followed Cigwaja, but as Cigwaja was one of the Invader headmen under Chiwalo during the period of invasion, he now recognized Chiwalo as the chief. The area that is now Chiwalo's chiefdom was divided out among these five headmen. As other headmen came into the area they had to approach one of these five for land rights. These, when granted, were granted irrevocably in a block to the new village headman who then had sole rights to distribute the land afterwards. If he had the land to spare, he may have granted a portion of it to yet another village headman, and this action was also irrevocable. The land occupation pattern in any particular area is therefore extremely complex, because in addition to the village garden areas, indivi-

[1] MacDonald, *Africana*, i, 147. See p. 35 above.

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duals may hold garden plots in other village areas which they have temporarily borrowed in a private arrangement with the individual owner. But when the system is seen in relation to the pattern of occupation of the area, it is greatly simplified. Each garden may be traced back to the original owner through three or four village headmen. The pattern of the reversion of rights follows the same system. The garden land of a village which has recently moved in and is moving out again reverts directly to the village headman who granted it. If he has moved out it reverts back to the village headman from whom it was in turn acquired.[1] These original landholders form the central points of locally organized areas to-day. For example, in Chiwalo's area there is Chiwalo at the top of the scale, then there are Kapaloma, Cigwaja, Mumbwa, Makata and Nyanje as the most important village headmen, and they take precedence over any of the other village headmen. All the others who have come into the area since then, of whom many are Nguru, rank very much lower.

From the smallest village to the chiefdom as a whole, therefore, there is a series of overlapping areas of organization. In any particular area chosen at random in a chiefdom as large as, say, Kawinga's, there will probably be two or three small villages which recognize the primacy of one of their number. The headman of this village may be called in to arbitrate in disputes over land or personal quarrels or even in the private consultations held after the death of a village member (*mapeto*). But the superior headman in turn recognizes *his* superior who was in the area before him. This system is extended over larger and larger areas, each headman in turn recognizing some other headman who was in the area before him, until ultimately the primacy of the Invader chief over all his headmen is established by the same principle. There is no clear-cut district organization as among the Zulu and Bemba.[2]

[1] See also 'Preliminary Notes on Land Tenure and Agriculture among the Machinga Yao', *Human Problems*, x (1950), 1–13. This system of land-holding has been called 'estates of holding' by Gluckman. See his *Essays on Lozi Land and Royal Property*, Rhodes-Livingstone Paper, No. 10 (Livingstone, 1943), p. 29 ff.

[2] See the essays by Gluckman and Richards in Fortes, M., and Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *African Political Systems*, Oxford University Press for the International African Institute (London, 1940).